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ABSTRACT

This research draws upon both a preliminary study conducted over a 3-year period, in which a group of 15 children was tracked through the first 3 years of school, as well as works-in-progress. The particular concern of this research is the accessibility of the complex organization of reading instruction to young readers, realized by explicit and implicit relationships among written, spoken, and visual texts which constitute the intertextual fabric of reading instruction. The research is framed by a view of intertextuality as a constellation of theoretical approaches concerned with relationships between texts. Data gathered through audiotape transcripts and observational field notes have shown that teacher-meditated classroom reading lessons contain a complex of intertextual links. These intertextual relationships may be realized at varying levels of graphology/phonology, lexico-grammar and semantics, as well as in connections across contexts. In any one lesson, there was often found a continual moving from one level to another as relationships were drawn out, and the relationships were seen to be cued both explicitly through verbal interactions and implicitly through body positioning, intonation, gestures, and the arrangement of the physical context. The data also frequently revealed the transient nature of teaching and learning processes, in which children's very significant intertextual understandings (influenced by their particular cultural and social background) may be missed, and therefore invalidated, in the pursuit of intertextual agendas that impose dominant adult frames of reference upon children's utterances and experiences. Classroom data and interview data have also revealed differences in the kinds of relationships among texts perceived and valued by children and teachers. (Contains 9 references.) (EV)

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INTERTEXTUALITY AND BEGINNING READING INSTRUCTION IN THE INITIAL SCHOOLS YEARS

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ABSTRACT

The intent of this paper is to explore the notion of intertextuality as it is applied to the authors' ongoing inquiry into reading instruction in the initial school years. This research has involved the documentation of reading experiences in K–2 classrooms within the qualitative paradigm. Drawing upon multiple theories which frame the study and provide analytical tools, the authors examine some of the themes emerging from their work in terms of teacher mediation between children and texts.

INTRODUCTION

Consider the following transcript taped during silent reading time in a Year One classroom:

> Lenny turns to a page in his book which depicts a family tree with familial labels. He reads each label. When he comes to *nephew*, he turns to the adult assisting and asks:
>
> L: What does this word say?
>
> P: Nephew.
>
> L: Duckville.
>
> P: It says *nephew*.
>
> L: **Duckville.**
>
> P: It says *nephew* (pointing to the word *nephew*). See, what sound does it start with?
>
> L: /n/
>
> P: Uh-huh, /n/ for *nephew*.
>
> L: Yeah, and that's like Huey, Dewey and Louie, and they live at **Duckville** Donald Duck and I watch them on television.

This sequence reveals the difficulties which teachers and students may encounter when, in the absence of a mutually shared and understood history of texts, they fail to access each other's meanings. In the absence of the adult's experience with the Donald Duck texts, she failed to recognise and validate the child's implicit proposal of an intertextual relationship.

The intent of this paper is to explore some of the themes which have emerged from the authors' ongoing classroom-based research on beginning reading instruction in the initial school years. The paper draws upon both a preliminary study conducted over a three year period, during which time a group of 15 children were tracked through their first three years of school (Harris, 1992), as well as works-in-progress funded by the Australian Research Council. The particular concern of this research is the accessibility of the complex organisation of reading instruction to young readers, realised by explicit and implicit relationships among written, spoken and visual texts which constitute the intertextual fabric of reading instruction.

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THEORIES OF INTERTEXTUALITY

Use of multiple theories

This paper, and the research it draws upon, is framed by a view of intertextuality as a constellation of theoretical approaches concerned with relationships between texts. These texts include written, spoken and visual texts. These approaches to intertextuality offer both theoretical explanations for textual relationships and analytical tools for examination of texts in relation to the larger system of signifying practices or use of signs in a culture.

Intertextuality conceives of our knowledge of texts as existing within a constantly changing network of intertexts, past, present and future (Morgan, 1989) and provides an array of tools and explanations which facilitate movement back and forth between micro-analysis, such as a single text within a classroom and macro perspectives of broader cultural conditions such as discourses of class, race and gender.

Kristeva's formulation of intertextuality

After Kristeva (1984), who is credited with coining the term 'intertextuality', the notion is used to signify the multiple ways in which a literary text echoes or is linked to other texts, whether by open or covert citations and allusions, or by the assimilation of the formal and substantive features of an earlier text, or simply by the participation in a common stock of literary and linguistic procedures and conventions. In this formulation, Kristeva initially drew on traditional psychoanalysis and the process described therein of transference by the analys and of meanings associated with the object of their neurosis to the analyst. Following from this, Kristeva developed a similar notion in semiotics and literary theory. Intertextuality was described as transposition, or the passage from one sign system to another through displacement and condensation and through altering of the thetic position or frame of reference.

Functional linguistics perspective of intertextuality

Drawing upon a functional language model (Halliday, 1985a), the notion of intertextuality is seen to encompass spoken and written texts with a view of lesson as intertext which provides or limits access to texts and discourses of lessons. Context is understood as the environment of text, consisting of both the socio-cultural system, which incorporates the behaviour potential for language users, and those many instances of the social system that occur as contexts of situation. Halliday (1985b:47) argues that a dialectic relationship exists between text and context, one creating the other:

> *'Meaning' arises from the friction between the two. This means that part of the environment for any text is a set of previous texts, texts that are taken for granted as shared among those taking part ... Every lesson is built on the assumption of earlier lessons in which topics have been explored, concepts agreed upon and defined; buy beyond this there is a great deal of unspoken cross-reference of which everyone is largely unaware.*

Aspects of this kind of intertextuality identified by Halliday include not only relationships to do with subject matter but also interpersonal features, such as underlying participant structures, coded expressions which act as signals for what is to happen next, and underlying intertextual assumptions about children's previous and current experiences and interpretations.

Halliday also identifies intertextuality at school in terms of the broader socio-cultural context of schooling. Lessons are bound together by the theories, practices, and values derived from this context and which impact upon pedagogic decisions and practices in the classroom setting. Any one instance of classroom interaction wherein a teacher chooses to validate or negate a child's response may be partly understood in terms of immediate goals and expectations, and more broadly understood in terms of the schooling context in which the teacher and children function.

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A functional systemic linguistic perspective enables an analytic focus upon texts in contexts, to portray linguistically the classroom context of lessons wherein texts are read, shared and talked about. This leads to analysis of intertextual assumptions underlying lessons, linguistic patterns of organisation that connect reading lessons, and linguistic cuing of intertextual connections (verbal, gestural, prosodic, as well as artefact manipulation).

Combing semiotic and discourse theories

Dealing with semiotic and discourse theories together, intertextuality may be explained by linking single texts with broader bodies of texts. A discourse is a set of textual arrangements which acts to organise and coordinate the actions, beliefs and subjectivities of people who are the same time in the process of maintaining or producing it. One of the key effects texts have is to provide a context in which other texts are read and understood. They suggest metalingual cues through which a text's codes may be recognised and understood, and they link up with the contextual function through which a text indicates the context in which it is operating (Thwaites et al., 1994). This can indicate how a culture functions and is represented. One text never functions in total independence from others.

Just as a text's structure is influenced by similar texts both in its production and in its apprehension, so too are readings shaped by the same process. Texts, readings and the cultural values they support and enact are historically placed. Intertextuality facilitates going beyond the understanding of texts and the subjects they produce in interaction with human beings as static single objects, to a view of textuality, subjectivity and culture as processes of social reproduction and change. In particular, our study uses this perspective to consider the readings made manifest in teacher mediation between children and texts at school. This leads these researchers to examine the impact of intertextual history upon how individuals insert themselves into or resist different implied positions, and upon the intertextual relationships and assumptions they construe and can access in the classroom.

TEACHER MEDIATION BETWEEN TEXT AND READER

Readers bring to texts their histories of immersion in particular discourses which predispose them, for example, to certain interpretations of text (after Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). When young children in Davies' study (1989) were confronted with texts which deliberately construct a subject position different from those constructed in the dominant discourses, the children failed to detect and/or accept this position. Rather, they adopted a position oppositional to that in the text, influenced by the dominant discourses in which they were immersed. One of the tasks of successful reading is learning to detect the reading position offered by a text and deciding whether to accept or reject it. At school, readers who have been immersed in the dominant discourses are at an advantage over those who are not, with important implications for access, equity and success at school.

However, in the initial school years, it is common practice for the teacher to act as a mediator between children and written texts during lessons such as shared book experience. This intersubjective mediation means that children do not work directly with the written text but rather with the spoken interactions about those texts. Further, this mediation is not only text-driven but also framed by a teacher's pedagogic goals, beliefs and assumptions about children as literacy learners — which, in turn, are shaped by the socio-cultural context of school.

Shared reading lessons as intertexts

Analysis of such interactions, documented in this inquiry through audiotaped transcripts and observational field notes, has revealed a complex of intertextual links whereby such lessons are organised: constituting a text (a spoken text), they explicitly and implicitly relate to the focal written text, to other written texts and to previous classroom interactions. In classroom reading lessons, the notion of intertextuality has been found to be all-embracing of spoken, written and visual texts.

Our classroom data have also revealed that the substance of these intertextual relationships may be realised at varying levels of graphology/phonology, lexico-grammar and semantics, as well as embracing connections across contexts. In any one lesson, there often was found a

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continual moving from one level to another as relationships were drawn out. For example, in a shared reading lesson which focused upon 'Crocodile Beat' in a Year One classroom, the teacher continued to move to and fro between these levels, drawing out relationships between: the text and other texts in the series; visual and verbal texts in the book; rhyming and rhythmic features of the text; and initial consonant blends of words in the text and display charts in the classroom.

The intertextual relationships organising reading instruction were seen to be cued both explicitly through verbal interactions and implicitly through body positioning, intonation, gestures and the arrangement of the physical context. These are instances of 'coded expressions' to which Halliday referred (1985b). Lessons such as shared reading are organised by a complex of relationships which children must access to make meaning and participate effectively; further, they are linked implicitly by virtue of their organisation and underlying rules for participation, thereby requiring children to access what may remain implicit. Children are positioned by what is selected, proposed, taken up and validated — and not validated — about the particular text at hand.

Intertextual relations were seen to be achieved through social processes. That is, relationships are proposed, recognised, taken up, acknowledged, validated and ascribed significance through the running commentary a teacher provides and negotiates with the children, questions a teacher poses and through the reiteration, interpretation, written recording and evaluation of children's responses (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993). For teachers to be able to recognise children's perspectives, they needed to access their intertextual intentions and histories. When this understanding was present, and when children's responses were congruent with teacher expectations, responses were validated and ascribed significance. In the absence of this understanding on the part of the teacher, a child's response was ignored or explicitly negated. On closer reflection of such responses in the data, and after follow-up conversations with the children, it was revealed that children's responses in these instances were appropriate if not sought by the teacher.

To illustrate these findings, consider the following excerpt from a shared reading sequence in a Year One classroom:

Teacher props big book *Shuffle Shuffle Rhyme Chime* on easel.
T: Move closer, children, so you can see the book.
[Children move closer.]
T: Where do we have the 'jingle jangle' words?
Some children: There.

The display of the focal text highlights the significance of the text as the lesson's focus, as may be construed on the basis of other similar lessons. The teacher's question linked the lesson to a previous lesson when the 'jingle jangle' word list was established. The use of 'we' in this question may be seen to imply shared knowledge of the 'jingle jangle' text, its location and its connection to what has preceded and what is to follow this lesson. The request can only make sense in this context and to those who participated in the previous lesson.

The text's rhyming structures influenced the interactions and activities surrounding it as the lesson continued:

T: What words rhyme with 'jingle jangle'?
[Children raise their hands.]
T: Jimmy.
J: Mangle
T: Mangle. [Teacher writes 'mangle' on 'jingle jangle' list.]

Here, the simple raising of children's hands reflects links to other lessons of similar formats with underlying participant rules. The teacher's recording of 'mangle' signals implicit validation of the child's response. As the lesson continued, there were also occasions of explicit validation:

T: Susan.
S: Dangle.

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T: Very clever! That's the one I was thinking of. I was thinkingabout it this weekend.
[Teacher adds 'dangle' to the list.]

Here, the teacher has imposed her own interpretive frame of reference upon Susan's contribution. It remains unclear whether it is appropriate and it certainly reflects assumptions about Susan's experiences and intentions.

T: I thought of that when I was dangling my teabag at home on the weekend. Annie.
A: Single.
T: Single.
[Teacher adds 'single' to the list.]
T: Were you looking at the cheese, were you?
[Annie does not respond.]
T: Kraft Singles.
[Annie gives a small nod.]

Annie was more tentative than Susan in acknowledging the teacher's interpretations of her response. The teacher's question, 'Were you looking at the cheese?' draws rather cryptically an intertextual connection between 'single' and 'Kraft Singles' and again reveals assumptions the teacher has brought to this lesson about these children's experiences outside the classroom.

Validation of children's intertextual contributions in shared reading

The question of validation is important to children's success at school; to what degree this validation is expressed in appropriate terms congruent with children's experiences and interpretations will effect its impact upon children. Clearly, the teacher is in the position of granting and withholding acknowledgement and validation (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993) but it would also seem to hold true that children need to be able to recognise the teacher's frame of reference to know that they are being validated. Annie's tentative nod above (and follow-up conversation by the researcher) indicated that Annie did not recognise the teacher's link, but went through the motions nonetheless of 'acknowledging' it with a nod.

The concern with validation, and consequences for equity and access at school, continues to be a major theme emerging from our data to date. It raises the question, 'What happens when children's intertextual proposals and responses are not validated?' Such an occasion was illustrated at the beginning of this paper, in the case of Lenny. It was not the case that Lenny's response 'Duckville' was inappropriate, nor did it reflect a misconception. What the excerpt does reveal is that children's responses may be misconstrued as 'misconceptions' because they are not the responses sought or anticipated by the teacher at a given point in time.

The following extract further illustrates this point and is taken from observational and transcript data recorded during a reading sequence in a Kindergarten classroom. The focal text was 'Meg's Eggs' by Helen Nicholl and Jan Pienkowski. This text is being shared with the class following its introduction the previous day. The teacher selected a section from 'Meg's Eggs' to read to the class, without showing the illustrations:

T: Listen to this.
[Reading]
'Lizards and newts, three loud hoots, green frogs' legs, three big eggs.'
What does that sound like?
Cathy: Like a rock-a-bye.
T: It doesn't sound like something that would put me to sleep.
Edward: It's a spell.
T: What is a spell?
Sarah: It's magic.

And so the lesson continued in its intended focus upon spells. But what of Cathy's response and, more significantly, the teacher's response to Cathy? It is evident from that data that Cathy's response did not match the teacher's anticipated intertextual link between the verse

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and the notion of spells. Edward's response did match this agenda and so was taken up and validated by the teacher. Yet, on careful reflection, we need to consider Cathy's intertextual perspective. In Cathy's interviews, it was revealed that Cathy participates as a reader in rhyming books at home. She talked at length and very freely about nursery rhymes such as 'Round and round the garden' and identified patterns of similarity among these kinds of texts. Her familiarity with rhyming texts explains her response, 'Like a rock-a-bye', itself a nursery rhyme, identifying an analogy between such a rhyme and the spell text which also rhymed. Furthermore, Cathy encountered rhymes at bedtime, further consolidating the association with lullaby rhymes.

In light of these insights into some of Cathy's intertextual history, the teacher's response, 'It doesn't sound like something that would put me to sleep', failed to recognise and therefore validate the quite sophisticated level at which Cathy was at that moment functioning in terms of her intertextual understandings.

This excerpt also highlights the transient nature of teaching and learning processes frequently revealed in our classroom data — in particular, the fleeting moments wherein children often reveal very significant understandings. These may too often be missed in the pursuit of intertextual agendas which may impose adult frames of reference upon children's utterances and experiences. For example, in the sequence of documented lessons focusing on 'Meg's Eggs', it became clear that the intertextual resources which the teacher sought to focus on and develop were recipes in cookbooks. Whilst the focal text as an intertext linked to other texts in the 'Meg and Mog' series, as well as to narratives about witches, these relationships were not given weight during these lessons. Rather, the focal text was linked to recipes by virtue of the teacher's intertextual agenda to link spells with recipes. Underlying this agenda is a set of assumptions about children's familiarity with recipes and cookbooks and the exclusion of more obvious intertextual resources such as fantasy narratives and traditional fairy tales which many children reported reading in their interviews.

Responses like those of Cathy and Lenny should not be dismissed as 'misconceptions' (it may be the teacher who has not understood) but, rather, taken up and explored with the child so mutual understanding is reached. If such negotiation can be conducted during the course of shared reading experiences, then children would have the benefit of access to a range of different points of view rather than just the one driving the lesson at hand. Understanding children's intertextual histories and using this knowledge as a basis for planning will also assist the effectiveness of such discussions. Over time, it would be hoped that the complex and multifarious relationships among texts, uttered by children in an instant and not ascribed significance, would be made more explicit and enrich children's experiences as readers and literacy users. Further, it would lend validation to diversity of experience while permitting explicit access to those texts and discourses valued by school and critical to success therein.

The withholding of validation, albeit due to lack of insight in such transient but quite critical moments, may have an accumulative impact upon children's participation at school. In the case of Lenny, such instances were frequent and he became increasingly marginalised from such lessons. This marginalisation was made manifest in his choice to physically sit apart from his peers on the mat, his reluctance to volunteer responses, and his observed behaviours and quiet, self-directed talk which acted out his own resistance at the time such lessons were in train.

In the case of Cathy, for the remainder of the particular lesson on 'Meg's Eggs', she made no further contribution. However, for her this was not a consistent pattern. When in other lessons her responses were validated by the teacher, her participation continued. Her interview data nonetheless stood in contrast to her participation in formal lessons, in so far as she articulated her understandings of relationships among texts much more elaborately than the format of lessons allowed. Here, too, is another implication for classroom practice: that we as teachers provide contexts which enable children to demonstrate what it is they know and understand.

We also need to recognise that in certain situations, such as shared reading, there are constraints which may limit what it is children are able to contribute and what it is teachers

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recognise and therefore validate. It has emerged from our data that different classroom contexts provide varying degrees of freedom for what is able to be made explicit or manifest. For example, the documentation of small group interactions which follow teacher-led whole class lessons reveals children's proposals of intertextual links not to written texts but to the audio-visual texts they view on television and VCRs, which were not brought to bear in the observed lessons. This raises another issue to do with the privileging of written texts at school and the need to validate children's intertextual histories which embrace different media.

Children's and teachers' perspectives of intertextuality

Across the classroom data and interview data with children and teachers, trends have emerged in terms of the differences between the kinds of relationships among texts perceived and valued by teachers and children. Children articulated their understandings about intertextuality in terms of:

similarities among book characters
their judgements about book types (e.g., 'funny', 'scary')
the membership of books to a recognisable corpus of texts
textual features such as rhyme and repetition
links with their personal experiences
setting
common authorship

Teachers, across the classroom data, were seen to use the following as the most prevailing intertextual resources:

membership to a recognisable corpus of texts
links on the basis of grapho-phonic similarities and differences
links to previous and forthcoming lessons
text innovations
links on the basis of genre
links amongst written resources on display

These trends in the data which indicate these differences point to the need for teachers to examine their own intertextual agendas and assumptions, and the degree of congruence with children's experiences and frames of reference. Children are positioned in classroom discourses which are shaped by underlying agendas and assumptions. Identifying assumed knowledge and questioning this in terms of what is known about children's intertextual histories provides a basis for opening up access to lessons such as those documented in this paper.

IN CONCLUSION

Classroom discourses by and large reflect the dominant discourses of a given culture and historical context. Beginning readers without access to these may not detect and/or accept the positions constructed therein and so success at school may be undermined. To succeed at school, it seems that children need to be able to shift across interpretive frames and discourses and insert themselves in the implied positions at school. In any classroom, it is anticipated that only some readers will take up readily available positions because discourses differentially position according to hierarchies of power including race, gender, age and class. That this is so remains to be further substantiated in the inquiry at hand.

Children's positioning in teacher-mediated encounters with texts is an important issue and, in order to be able to recognise, reject or accept positionings in the classroom, a reader needs to be able to access the dominant discourses found in the classroom. It is inappropriate to assume that all children can access these discourses, given the diversity of backgrounds represented in classrooms which reflect the cultural diversity of our society. As educators, we need to understand the intertextual and discursive histories children bring to the classroom and how these shape their interpretations of lessons and written texts there. It is also possible to make available other discourses to expand choices. These issues are critical to equity, access and success at school and in the broader socio-cultural context of society.

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